Title: Fairbury's Worst Floods

By: Dale C. Maley

-supposed to be 2 articles in the 1958 special blade centennial edition, which I made into a book. Can I find the articles?

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The Flood of 1869

Many papers in this area have compared the flood with that of 1869, the greatest flood in recorded history, and this one is the greatest since that time.

There probably is no living person who can recall the flood of 1869, but the late A. G. Phelps, born in 1852 on a farm south of town, recalled it clearly and often told his children about it. It was a rainy year, with water courses already swollen, and on the 9th of June a nine-inch rain fell for hours in cloudburst volume, raising the creek, which borders the farm on the north, six feet, filling lowlands for miles, with fearful damage to crops, livestock, and property. "Everything that would float, from the head of the creek was lodged in Spence's timber," said Mr. Phelps; and the boys of that period had a great time the following few days climbing around the debris of wagons, buggies, and farm property of all kinds caught in the timber.

Years later when Mr. Phelps used to take his children out to the farm in the buggy, he sometimes stopped at the entrance, pointed to a notch cut in the gate post, and said, "Boys, there is the high water mark of 1869."

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## 7.3 Inch Rainfall In 4 Hours Brought About Flood In 1951

(This story won first place in the Illinois Press Association Contest among Illinois newspapers)

The severe wind and rain storm which lashed Fairbury and the general vicinity for miles around Sunday night was described by long-term local residents as the worst of its kind that they could remember. The ensuing floods were said to be the highest here since 1869.

Crop damage for the entire general area was being estimated at 2 million dollars, not to speak of property damage.

Sheets of rain fell in cloudburst proportions and winds reached hurricane-like force during the major part of the storm which lasted some four hours — roughly between 8

p.m. and midnight. The government rain gauge at the waterworks at the south edge of town recorded a deluge of 7.3 inches.

Federal conservation men said that according to government records for this area 4 inches of rain in 4 hours will be the maximum rainfall to be expected here in a 50-year period and that once in 100 years 4 and one-half inches would be the maximum rainfall to fall in 4 hours. It appears that nature has no respect for estimates, since the rainfall exceeded anything that government conservationists expected to happen in any 100 year period.

Resembles Jungle

Wind velocity was not recorded here, but rain was driven at the height of the storm at about a 10-degree angle with the ground. Trees and large branches of trees were blown down throughout the city in great quantity, the walks and streets of the town resembling a jungle to residents as they awoke on Monday morning. No street in the entire city escaped the falling branches. Many of the streets were blocked. While driving through the streets it seemed that one was going through a path in a forest.

The high winds also knocked down three large billboards just east of town, blew over a light pole at the softball diamond, blew out window panes from some farm buildings and at least at one store building, tore away a part of the roof on the new high school gymnasium, and toppled chimneys on at least four buildings. To top it off, the gale started in motion two empty freight cars standing on a siding at the Honegger mill, blowing them a distance of some 400 feet and with such force that when the first car struck other cars on a joining track, it was derailed. Severest damage was done in the northeast section of town, where larger trees were actually uprooted in several cases.

Highest in 82 Years

The Blade could find no one who could remember when water reached an overall higher level since 1869. However, David Munz said that in 1927 11 inches of water flowed over the west end of the cement bridge east of town. Straight north from town, roads were impassable to automobiles at a distance of two miles from the Vermilion river. Not all of the intervening land was under water, but within a half-mile of the river, practically all fields were inundated, the tops of two to three foot high corn stalks barely showing above the water in some fields, and completely covered in others.

Northeast of the city water was reported level with the floor boards of the Fugate bridge. Jim Mowery, who has lived near the bridge for over 60 years, said the water was six inches higher than he had ever seen it before. The river at this point was a mile and a quarter wide.

The water in that section also reached to within four inches of the floor in the new farm home of the Roy Goulds'. Pigs were chased into the front yard in order to save them from drowning. At dawn Monday morning Mr. and Mrs. Charles Dart were rescued from their farm home which had become completely surrounded by water. Royce and Harry Carter

and Kenny Brandt drove a motor boat through a corn field to carry out the rescue. They crossed fences without having to lift the motor.

Wing's oldest resident reported a water level on Route 47 just west of that village, higher than he, or his father, had ever witnessed.

The golf course, for years a measure for water levels, was completely covered with the exception of the club house and Nos. one, two and six greens. The water approached the club house to within a distance of 20 or 30 feet.

Water was left standing in a dozen different streets, in several cases reaching into yards to lap at the steps of homes. Water still reached to the top of the curbstone at Second and Oak streets late Monday evening, 24 hours after the first rain. Hickory and Walnut streets also had water standing for many hours. Water also went over the First street extension leading north from town, reaching the porches of a number of homes along the road.

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There was not a dry basement in town, or if there was, The Blade did not hear of it. The comment was passed at least on four occasions that "this is the first time we've had water in our basement." Depths varied from a few inches to five feet in basements Monday morning, many retaining as much as three feet as late as Monday night. Plumbers said Tuesday that it would take two more days to pump out all the basements.

Honeggers' & Co. estimated a huge loss in damaged motors when the basement of their mill filled to within a foot and a half of the ground floor. The basement was said to have filled quickly after a portion of the T., P. & W. track ballast, acting as a dike, was washed from under the tracks, releasing a large amount of water built up on the other side.

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The bridge at Forrest was completely under water, abutments and all. One section of the bridge was completely washed away, and two others partly taken by the rushing current. The water at this point reached a depth of at least eight feet above the stream's normal surface.

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Directly adjacent to the stream was the trailer camp set up for the trailer homes of the men working on the pipeline.

Most of the workers and their families apparently were asleep during the first part of the storm, or thought little about the possibilities of it reaching cloudburst proportions. Here is the story one lady told about the discovery of the rising water:

“It was about 10:30 and I had told my husband to get up and open some windows in the rear of our trailer. When he opened the door he stepped out into water about two feet deep. The first thing he did was to see about our toy terrier puppy that we had tied to a leash under the trailer. He was drowned.

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The first clouds appeared in the west, a plain mass of dark blue. Soon after dark, low-hanging clouds formed in the northwest, and the atmosphere took on a rather peculiar color, greenish in tint. At about 7:45 it was black as night outside, a time when an hour of good daylight usually remains.

At 7:50, according to the government rain gauge, it began to rain. The rain was accompanied by much lightning and thunder, but no heavy winds. By 9 o'clock it had rained exactly one inch. Between 9 and 10 it poured down 2.4 inches. It was a little after 9:30 that the first heavy wind began, and at 9:45 the electrical power went off. The wind and rain subsided about 10 o'clock, but started again abruptly at 10:20. In the next 40 minutes it rained an additional 1.8 inches, and the wind reached its greatest velocity.

From 11 p.m. to shortly after 2 a.m. the rain continued, without the heavy wind, depositing an additional 2.1 inches of water.

It was during the worst part of the storm, between 10:30 and 11, that an airplane circled very low over Fairbury, the pilot no doubt attempting to get his bearings from landmarks such as the highway.

"Chub" Mehrkens heard the plane, telephoned Chanute Field and asked them to try to get in touch with the plane. The Air Base did and the plane landed there safely.

The storm extended into Indiana, where it took the form of a tornado at Kokomo.

Crop Damage Heavy

It is thought the crop damage in Livingston county will run between two million and two and a half million dollars.

In the area hit worst by the storm the soybean crops will be an almost complete loss. Along the river bottom lands the loss is complete. Some corn may survive.

If the county's crops remain under water for three days, all corn will be lost, Paul Wilson, county farm adviser, said.

"Top soil being washed from the high ground into the Illinois river will cause land values to depreciate. Phosphate, limestone, and potash alone washed off the ground would assume startling damage figures," W. D. Spence, county chairman of the Production and Marketing Administration, reported.

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The 1869 flood

Blade archives don't start until 1876, so nothing in blade.

June 29, 1869, Muscatine, iowa, evening journal

# THE LATE STORM.

## Towns Flooded and Crops Damaged.

CHICAGO, June 28.—Telegraphic dispatches from various parts of the country give accounts of great damage to property by the heavy rain of Saturday night. Near Pontiac, on the line of the Chicago & Alton railroad, several bridges were washed away and much damage done to private property. A dispatch from Peoria says the whole country east of there is flooded between Gilman and Peoria. Reports are of towns covered with water, roads and bridges washed away, houses floating off, and other disastrous consequences. It is feared that the crops are very materially injured. The loss at Forest is estimated at $5,000 to $10,000. The town is entirely inundated. At Paper City half the town is covered with water. At Gilman the water is deep enough to float an Illinois river steamer. At Fairbury, two hundred feet of Indian Creek bridges are gone. Kickapoo Creek bridge, in Peoria county, is missing. Several houses at Peoria were struck by lightning during the storm.

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July 13, 1951 pantagraph

# Heavy Damage From Flood At Fairbury

FAIRBURY — The waters have gone down, but the greatest rainstorm in the memory of Fairbury has left its mark. Every available electrician is at work cleaning motors which were submerged in basements.

A feed mill, owned and operated by Honeggers' and Co. had to have many of its motors taken out after two six inch pumps lifted untold thousands of gallons of water out of the basement. Fortunately no water got into the feed silos or hoppers. Men worked all night long fighting the rising waters. C. R. Boris, mill superintendent, and Erwin Wsacher, assistant manager, spent most of the night trying to control the swirling waters.

One side track was washed out on the north side of the mill. Two box box cars were blown a hundred yards down the track into another line of cars, derailing one of the box cars, and damaging the others.

**Damage Estimated**

The mill was expected to be back in operation just three days after everything was under water.

It's a miracle that no more damage was done than the 1 and ½ million dollars' estimate, considering the 7.3 inches of rain which fell. The oats were green enough that some of them will straighten up. Corn, some of it stunted by previous stands of water, was hard hit in the low places.

Some livestock was lost and a few small animals. At the Honegger farm South of Forrest, Shorty LeSage, Hut Anderson, and Harold Dickey worked from 10 p. m. to 2 a. m. to get 165 small pigs in off the pasture which was rapidly filling with water. Only 2 pigs, one four days old and the other two weeks old, were lost at this farm. There are about 850 pigs and hogs at the Honegger Farm.

**550 Pullets Lost**

Five hundred and fifty 8 week old pullets at the Honegger Farm were drowned when the rain shelter was flooded. There were about 25,000 pullets on the range at the time.

The water has gone down, but it will be a long time before the electricians, cleaners, and farmers stop talking about the big rain of '51.

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July 12, 1951, blade

Has big story and 12 photos.  Online copy very poor quality, need to photograph from bound blade book at Echoes Museum.  Checked and 1951 book is not missing.

Leader and sentinel only go back to 1870 online, so no 1869 articles.

## Pantagraph

Found June 30, 1869, article on Pontiac flood, which was supplied by the Pontiac Sentinel, I could not get this from Pontiac library website because they only go  back to 1870 on online access!!

So, let Chatgpt transcribe the article:

> PONTIAC HALF SUBMERGED.
>
> One Hundred Families Homeless—Bridges and Other Property Destroyed—A Worthy Citizen Drowned.
>
> [From the Pontiac Sentinel and Press.]
>
> It was not within the memory of men who have resided in Pontiac for thirty years, that so severe a rain and so disastrous a flood has been known, as visited us last week. We are aware that the human mind is subject to extravagance, and we are apt to think every severe rain the hardest, and every cold day the coldest, and every hot day the hottest, and it is possible that some one has seen a heavier rain than that of last Friday and Saturday, but we don't believe it. Old citizens of this town whose word is as good as an oath at any time, tell us that the river never was so high before at this place, and we believe them.
>
> When it commenced raining last Friday afternoon people in town waited till the rain should be over before attempting to go home, but they finally concluded they would not wait for it to stop; in fact it did not stop, but if possible, rained harder and harder each hour through the night.
>
> When daylight broke Saturday morning, all the sloughs and low places were full, and by actual measurement the rain had fallen from ten to fifteen inches during the night. Many chimneys in town which had never been known to fill up with water so as to run out of the stove-pipe hole, had poured out great streams of sooty water upon the floor and carpet of the unfortunate occupants.
>
> At intervals during the day Saturday, heavy falls of rain came down, increasing the prospect for a general flood. The water in the small streams and low places had become so high that railroad travel was considered dangerous, and all freight

trains were stopped. The way express did not arrive from the south until 10 o'clock, a. m., and the night express did not reach here until one o'clock, p. m. On Saturday the river was rising rapidly, and before night the water was running across the road on the south side of the bridge. During the night the river rose to an unprecedented height, and in the morning the sight was most terrifying. Every house south of the river, with the exception of a few on the hill, was surrounded by water, and in some near the river, the water nearly reached the second floor, while all of the houses situated on the low ground north and northeast, and northwest of the new school house on this side of the river, were surrounded by water, many of them having two feet of water on the floor.

The north slough running from the Duff Farm at the east across the town and along the north boundary of it, presented the appearance of a navigable river. Lots and farms which had been considered exempt heretofore now paid tribute to the flood.

The road leading east of the town was one uninterrupted sheet of water to the timber, where boats might have plied the distance.

The damage to fences, gardens and crops must have been immense along that locality. We believe every bridge was swept off the slough. But along the river the damage was the most severe. We did not learn that any dwellings were swept off, as but very few trees and logs came down, but out-houses, fences, sheds, &c., were swept away in great numbers.

On the south side of the river the water covered all the high table land to the extreme limits of the town, the Fair grounds, the Cemetery, and extended up considerable distance on to Mott & Collin's addition.

All day Sunday boats were in requisition, helping those out of their houses who were in danger of getting drowned out. Pigs, chickens, horses and cattle that were turned loose from their stables, were circulating around to find dry ground.

At the bridge, Street Commissioner Perry was at work, and with the assistance of Messrs. Bennett, Wheeler, Pushman and others, succeeded, after an almost superhuman effort, in saving the bridge. At the railroad bridge a large number of laborers were engaged in carrying iron and stone on for weight, cutting away the siding to allow the water to pass through, and warding off flood-wood that made its way down the river.

Mr. L. E. Kent's cattle sheds were inundated, and we learn that several of his hogs were drowned.

It is impossible yet to ascertain with any degree of certainty what the damage has been, but we hope that as the water recedes much of the property which now seems to be ruined or lost will be saved.

Taken altogether, Sunday was the most exciting day Pontiac ever witnessed, and we shall not be deemed irreverent if we put in a petition that the like may not be known here again, for the present at least.

The most serious and saddest part of our present flood, is the death of our estimable citizen, John Geiger, which occurred Monday afternoon. He was seen at work apparently endeavoring to save his fence, and asked one of his little children to go to the house and get a chain for his use. When the little child went into the house Mrs. G. told him to tell his father to come away from there, for she feared he was in danger. The child returned to carry his mother's message in time to see his father sinking in the river, gave the alarm, but before help could be got he was past recovery. An hour passed before his body was recovered, and when found it was near the place where he fell.

## If the 1869 flood was really bad, wouldn't the 1878 liv co history book included it?

Not there, searched all entries for 1869 and for flood, nothing there. Unusual since it was just 8 or 9 years before book publication?

## Transcription of 1951 Flood related articles in the Blade Newspaper

I transcribed these articles and made better pictures, so I can use the information in a new story I am writing about the two floods.

A copy of this transcription is below, so this document contains all the info I could find about the 2 big floods. I uploaded these transcriptions to Archive.Org as a separate file and they can be viewed or downloaded from there.

# Transcription of July 12 and july 19, 1951 Fairbury Blade newspaper on Big 1951 Fairbury IL Flood

**By:** **Dale C. Maley**
**Date:** **August 18, 2026**
**Data Source:** **Paper copies of the Blade in 1951 bound book at Fairbury Echoes Museum**

## July 12, 1951, Blade

### History's Greatest Rainfall Here Causes Worst Flood In 82 Years

**Record 7.3 Inches of Rain Falls in Six Hours;**
**Crop Damage for Area Estimated Near 2 Million; Water at Highest Level Since 1869.**

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Federal conservation men said that according to government records for this area 4 inches of rain in 4 hours will be the maximum rainfall to be expected here in a 50-year period and that once in 100 years 4½ inches would be the maximum rainfall to fall in 4 hours. It appears that nature has no respect for estimates, since the rainfall exceeded anything that government conservationists expected to happen in any 100 year period.

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## History's Greatest

*(Continued from Page 1)*

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It is thought the crop damage in Livingston county will run between two million and two and a half million dollars.

In the area hit worst by the storm the soybean crops will be an almost complete loss. Along the river bottom lands the loss is complete. Some corn may survive.

If the county's crops remain under water for three days, all corn will be lost, Paul Wilson, county farm adviser, said.

"Top soil being washed from the high ground into the Illinois river will cause land values to depreciate. Phosphate, limestone and potash alone washed off the ground would assume startling damage figures," W. D. Spence, county chairman of the Production and Marketing Administration, reported.

**The Flood of 1869**

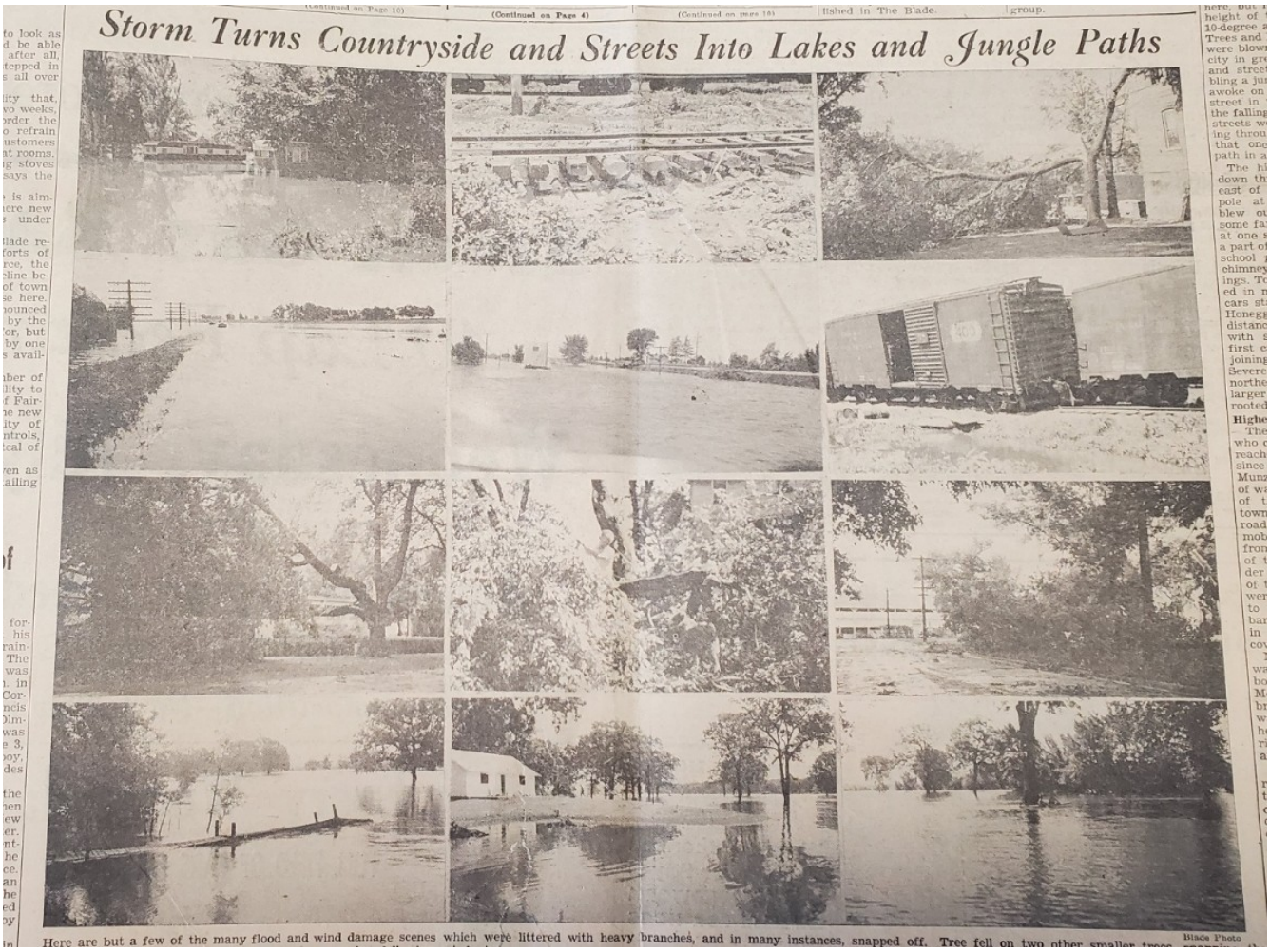
Many papers in this area have compared the flood with that of 1869, the greatest flood in recorded history, and this one is the greatest since that time.

There probably is no living person who can recall the flood of 1869, but the late A. G. Phelps, born in 1852 on a farm south of town, recalled it clearly and often told his children about it. It was a rainy year, with water courses already swollen, and on the 9th of June a nine-inch rain fell for hours in cloudburst volume, raising the creek, which borders the farm on the north, six feet, filling lowlands for miles, with fearful damage to crops, livestock and property. "Everything that would float, from the head of the creek was lodged in Spence's timber," said Mr. Phelps; and the boys of that period had a great

time the following few days climbing around the debris of wagons, buggies and farm property of all kinds caught in the timber.

Years later when Mr. Phelps used to take his children out to the farm in the buggy, he sometimes stopped at the entrance, pointed to a notch cut in the gate post, and said, “Boys, there is the high water mark of 1869.”

## 12 Photos that Accompany this article



Storm Turns Countryside and Streets Into Lakes and Jungle Paths

Here are but a few of the many flood and wind damage scenes which were littered with heavy branches, and in many instances, snapped off. Tree fell on two other smaller trees.

Blade Photo

NOTE: Above collage photo taken with digital camera from the paper newspaper. The long caption will be shown below.

ChatGPT was used to enhance the photo, which is shown below:

**Storm Turns Countryside and Streets Into Lakes and Jungle Paths**

## The relatively long caption below the photo collage of 12 photos is transcribed and shown below:

Here are but a few of the many flood and wind damage scenes that prevailed in Fairbury and vicinity Monday morning following the hectic storm of Sunday night. Readers must keep in mind that none of the pictures shows the water at its highest level, as that was reached sometime before daybreak Monday morning. All of the pictures were taken between 8 and 11 a. m. Monday. The photos show as follows:

**Top row, left:** A section of the trailer camp at Forrest. Situated not 75 yards from the normal channel of the Forrest creek, this area was one of the hardest hit by rising waters. Water at one time completely covered the small windows visible in the trailers, doing

untold damage to the approximately 15 trailers parked in the camp. Just to the right is the bridge on Route 24, which had water over its railings—about as high as the camera was held in taking the picture.

**Center:** A part of the washed-out switch track at the Honegger mill west of Fairbury. Ballast on a section of the main line was also washed away. This, and other washouts farther east, caused a cancellation of all T., P. & W. trains that was still in effect as The Blade went to press yesterday afternoon.

**Right:** More than half of this tree, growing in Central park, just behind the city hall, was blown down. Pictures on this page do not begin to show the overall appearance of city streets, all of which were littered with heavy branches, and in many instances, snapped off whole trees.

**Second row, left:** This is a view eastward on Route 24, taken from a point about 50 feet beyond the bridge just east of town. Water was flowing rapidly over the highway for a distance of some 1,000 feet as the picture was snapped, at a deepest point of about three inches. Only on a few occasions in many years has water gone over the road at this point, and remained there as long. Picture was taken over 24 hours after first rain came.

**Center:** This shot, taken from inside an automobile, is looking west from a point just beyond the bridge east of the curve between Fairbury and Forrest. It was snapped about a half-hour after the first cars were allowed to pass through. Water was still about 10 to 12 inches deep.

**Right:** This derailed box car, with another coupled behind, was blown down its siding by the Honegger mill with such force as to cause it to leave the rails when it struck another string of cars on an adjoining siding. Force of wind can be calculated somewhat by thinking of the force needed to put two box cars in motion.

**Third row:** These pictures show other parts of the widespread wind damage. Photo at left shows large limb of elm tree in front of C. J. Claudon home on Fourth and Elm streets which was snapped off. Tree fell on two other smaller trees, snapping the top from one. At right is scene on South Second street at the fair grounds, showing large limb which fell over sidewalk and smashed fence. In the center is portion of two trees which fell in front of the Frank Pratt home on North Fifth, damaging the top of his auto. Man with hatchet is the Rev. William Pritchard, who is being assisted by “Sonny” Pratt. Frank was also helping with the clearing operations, but is camouflaged somewhere in the picture by the tree.

**Bottom row:** Three views of the Indian Creek golf course, in which the creek predominates. This, without question, shows water at the highest level it has ever been since the course was constructed some 30 years ago. Residents stated, in fact, that flood was worst since 1869. Picture at left was taken from a position near No. 1 green looking

over the course to the southeast. Center shot shows relationship of water to clubhouse, looking northeast, and picture at right looks out from the clubhouse to No. 5 green, directly south. Note the rowboat. Crest at the course probably was not more than an inch higher than shown here.

The Blade is indebted to the Fultz Studio, which remained open until 11 o'clock Monday night to process these Blade films in order that they would appear in this issue.

## Flood Sidelights

Among the many stories arising from Sunday night's deluge and the resulting floods are the following:

More than 550 phones were out of order in Fairbury, caused by falling branches, wind and water damage. It will be a month before service in Fairbury returns to normal, according to Arnold Rigsby, repair man. There are eight lines to Forrest, but after the storm only one line was in operation, and long distance calls were limited to emergencies. Rural lines were badly damaged.

John Ziegenhorn, W. E. Butcher, Art Walters, and Ed Hohulin worked all day Monday removing the larger limbs from the street in order to permit two-way traffic.

Pigs are more intelligent than people suppose. James Goold's pigs, tired of swimming, rested their noses on a fence wire.

Albert Tavener caught a 19-pound carp while doing chores at the home of his father, Raymond Tavener.

Harry Kloffenstein said that he sold at least three radiators to motorists who had driven through deep water. Their fans had bent and slashed the radiator.

Most business houses had several feet of water in their basements. Water pumps, in many cases, worked all night Monday removing the water.

After the roofing blew off the new gym, over two inches of water covered the northwest section of the floor, according to Dewey DeMoss, who worked 4 hours Monday morning removing the water from the hard-wood floor, which began buckling. The damage will require the laying of a new floor in much of the gym, and run into thousands of dollars. The loss is covered by insurance.

The high school basement had water in it until Tuesday. The boiler room and fan room were flooded. Under water were the new stoker motors.

Many basements had water flowing out of the basement windows.

The insurance agents report that wind damage caused several chimneys to fall, and that other minor damages were common. Many persons remarked that Fairbury was fortunate because no homes were seriously damaged.

Some farmers lost practically their entire crop, and much livestock.

The city street crew, consisting of Charlie Runyon, Otis Hurt, and Kenneth Runyon has put in many hours picking up brush, opening streets and unplugging drains. They are trying to get around to everyone as soon as possible.

Ned Wagner caught two 15-pound carp Wednesday morning, while they were swimming near a mail box north of Fairbury.

The city's electrical and plumbing shops are busy drying out, replacing, and repairing mechanisms on such appliances as oil and stoker furnaces, washing machines, hot water heaters, and other motors, which were in the flooded basements.

Deepfreezers were bobbing around many basements. In one case, oil tanks in a basement were torn loose by the waters.

Clarence Wessels was among those losing livestock. He lost 3 heifers and 7 head of pigs.

One man driving through the rain on west Fairbury, saw the giant plane which was in this vicinity, bearing toward him with its lights on looking like a ball of fire.

He is said to have exclaimed seriously, "This is it! This is the end of the world."

Continued on Page 10

## Flood Sidelights — Continued from Page 1

Mr. and Mrs. Nate Steidinger, returning from Charlotte, Mich., where they had met Mrs. Steidinger's sister, Mrs. Carson, got into the storm at Huntington, Indiana and drove through water (which ran into their car on both sides) the remainder of the way home except for the detour at Chatsworth. There the wind was bad but there was no water across the roads.

They left Huntington at 9:30, reached Forrest at 3:15 and did not get to Fairbury until 6:00 a.m. They drove some 30 miles to get to Forrest to Fairbury.

The Fairbury Coal Chute, owned by Henry DeFries, was completely surrounded by water and up until yesterday Mr. DeFries had not been able to get into the office or do any work around the yards.

The porch at the Wesley Woodward home was damaged when water washed out one of the porch supports, allowing it to drop.

Some rooms at the Miss Eva Hornbeck home were in quite a mess following the storm. A walnut tree was blown down and hit the back porch and kitchen. This caused a stovepipe to fall down and soot scattered everywhere.

The Gene Zimmerman home was damaged somewhat when a tree was blown down and fell against the house.

Trees were blown down all over town and large limbs were torn from other trees. While several houses were hit by these falling trees there were may near misses.

## WATER 10 INCHES DEEP IN SKROBONAK HOME

Mr. and Mrs. Adam Skrobonak and daughter Mildred, and son Ernest, were forced to leave their home Monday evening due to the high flood conditions. The water rose 10 inches inside their house. All the livestock had to be moved to higher land. Some poultry was lost in the flood waters. The poultry saved had to be moved to the second story of the tool shed.

The neighbors that helped were Fred and Floyd Immke, William and Lee Athey, Bob Fawver and the Skrobonaks' daughter, Mrs. Everett Ruff.

## THREE FIRE DEPT. CALLS

The Fairbury fire department made three calls as a result of the storm. During the storm they were summoned to the Mac Locker farm, northeast of town, where a barn had been struck by lightning. The fire was out of control when the trucks arrived and with water rising swiftly over the road, they returned to town. Later that night the trucks were called to the Tom Kuntz farm home where a tree had been set ablaze by a live wire. Monday noon the department was called to the Irwin Nagle home where a toaster, forgotten when the current went off, had started a small blaze in a cupboard when the electricity was turned on.

Flood waters began to recede in the immediate Fairbury area Monday afternoon, but an additional rainfall of 3 inches Tuesday afternoon left water standing in the streets and partially refilled basements.

## Cornell Drowning Victim Grandson of Fairbury Woman

The 12-year-old son of a former Fairbury resident lost his life Monday morning in a rain-swollen creek near Cornell. The boy, Robert A. Olmstead, was drowned at about 11:45 a. m. in the Ida creek a mile south of Cornell. He was the son of Francis and Alice Olmstead. Mr. Olmstead, a native of Fairbury, was killed in a truck accident June 3, 1950. The grandmother of the boy, Mrs. Elizabeth Olmstead, resides here.

Robert was playing in the creek with three other boys when he suddenly sank from view about 50 feet out in the water. Witnesses said he had apparently stepped off a ledge, but he did not reappear at the surface. His body was recovered about an hour later, at the spot where he had gone down. Rescuers tried for an hour to revive the boy with artificial respiration.

Funeral services were held in Cornell Tuesday. Services are to be held in Chicago at 2 p. m. Friday. Burial will be made in the Palos Hills Memorial Gardens.

Robert Olmstead was born December 14, 1938, in Chicago. He moved to Cornell with his parents about two years ago. He would have entered the Seventh grade in the Cornell consolidated school next fall.

Besides his mother and grandmother, he is survived by a brother, Charles, of Chicago; a sister, Barbara Jean, at home; and the maternal grandmother, Mrs. E. C. Short, of Saginaw, Mich.

## Drinking Water Not Harmed by Flood

There is absolutely no possibility that the city’s drinking water may become contaminated by the recent flood, Dr. H. C. Saur told the Blade Wednesday.

Contaminated water could enter the mains at one place, Saur said and that would be at the water works. As flood waters did not even approach the plant, the water is definitely safe.

The only danger of any stagnant pools left by the flood lies in the fact that they could be a breeding place for mosquitoes. If the pools do not drain away in about two days, Mayor Taylor said, they will be sprayed.

Even though there is no danger in disease spreading from the water, Dr. Saur urged children to refrain from wading and swimming in flooded areas, as germs could be picked up from the unclean water.

# July 19, 1951 Blade Newspaper

## Pontiac Hard Hit By Flood Waters

The Vermilion river at Pontiac Tuesday morning hit its highest crest since the memorable flood of 1869, the Tuesday morning crest being just two inches lower than the crest of 82 years ago.

Many homes were flooded and families in the southwest area and the east part of town had to be evacuated. A number of families moved out when it became necessary to shut off gas and electricity.

Warden Jerome J. Munie of the Pontiac prison, estimates that $100,000 damage had been done to prison property, exclusive of damage done to the new power house.

## Shipping In Drinking Water at Streator

The swollen Vermilion river overran parts of Streator and inundated the water plant, making the water unfit for drinking. It is thought it will be a week yet before water service for households will be restored. In the meantime water was being shipped into Streator in railroad tank cars and distributed in milk trucks.

The Vermilion river at Streator was at the highest stage ever recorded, being five feet above flood level.

## Things Were Floating At Knoll Lodge

Si Moser and Will Morris went out to Knoll Lodge about six miles north of Fairbury, Tuesday, taking with them Mr. Morris' boat powered with an outboard motor.

As might be taken from its name, Knoll Lodge is situated on a high knoll, and the Vermilion river runs within a few feet of it. The two men found the cabin in its usual position and possibly the knoll is still there, judging from the fact that the cabin must be resting on it.

However, they could not see the knoll.

Mr. Morris and Mr. Moser left their car on the road and got into the boat and followed the same route as the members usually take when going down the lane in cars to the club house. They could tell where they were by the tops of the telephone poles protruding from the water.

They didn't have to get out of the boat to inspect the interior of the cabin. They opened a door and floated in. Chairs and other loose articles were floating about.

inside the cabin. They started to look for some of the outside equipment and after motoring around for a time they located the table bench lodged in the top of a tree. They hitched the bench onto the motor boat, took it back to the cabin, opened the door and floated it in for safe keeping. A gas tank that had floated away was seen by Raymond Tavener, and towed to his house.

One thing that Mr. Morris and Mr. Moser noted was that the main current of the river was not following the river bed, but was taking a short cut across the fields. There was very little action of the water where the river bed is.

This is the second time in the 32-year history of Knoll Lodge that water ever came up into the building. Following the heavy rain of May 10, 1933, some water came into the west room of the building.

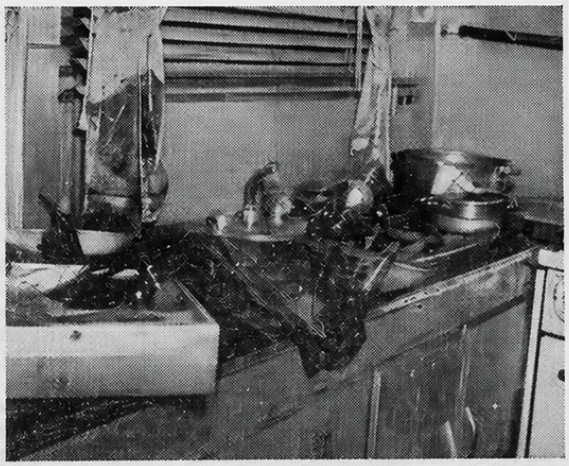
## 4 Photos from this Edition

possible to correct the trouble. Item to The Blade. nieces and nephews.

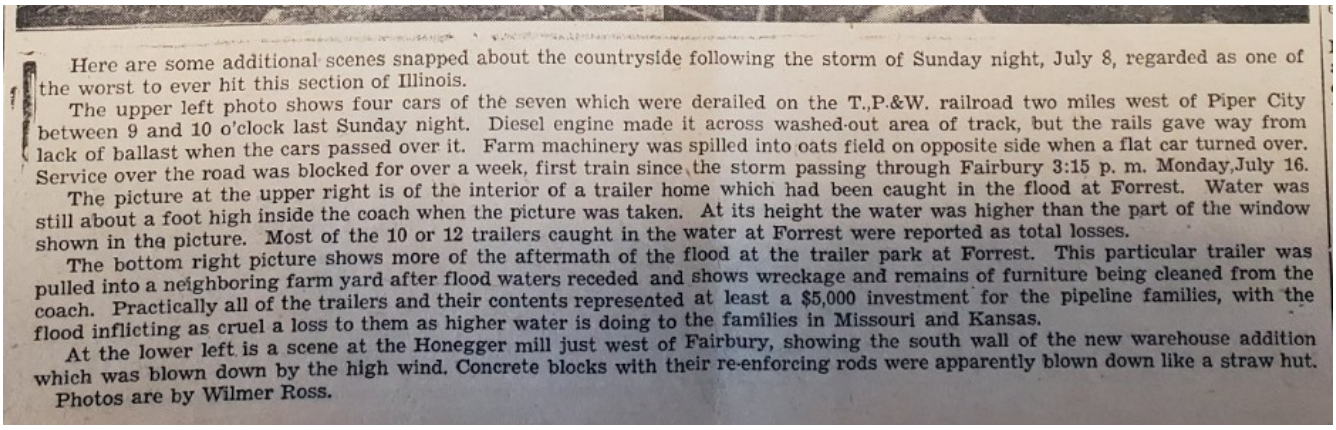
More Storm Damage Told In Pictures

## 4 Photos Improved by Chat GPT

# *More Storm Damage Told In Pictures*



## Original Caption



Here are some additional scenes snapped about the countryside following the storm of Sunday night, July 8, regarded as one of the worst to ever hit this section of Illinois.

The upper left photo shows four cars of the seven which were derailed on the T.,P.&W. railroad two miles west of Piper City between 9 and 10 o'clock last Sunday night. Diesel engine made it across washed-out area of track, but the rails gave way from lack of ballast when the cars passed over it. Farm machinery was spilled into oats field on opposite side when a flat car turned over. Service over the road was blocked for over a week, first train since the storm passing through Fairbury 3:15 p. m. Monday, July 16.

The picture at the upper right is of the interior of a trailer home which had been caught in the flood at Forrest. Water was still about a foot high inside the coach when the picture was taken. At its height the water was higher than the part of the window shown in the picture. Most of the 10 or 12 trailers caught in the water at Forrest were reported as total losses.

The bottom right picture shows more of the aftermath of the flood at the trailer park at Forrest. This particular trailer was pulled into a neighboring farm yard after flood waters receded and shows wreckage and remains of furniture being cleaned from the coach. Practically all of the trailers and their contents represented at least a $5,000 investment for the pipeline families, with the flood inflicting as cruel a loss to them as higher water is doing to the families in Missouri and Kansas.

At the lower left is a scene at the Honegger mill just west of Fairbury, showing the south wall of the new warehouse addition which was blown down by the high wind. Concrete blocks with their re-enforcing rods were apparently blown down like a straw hut.

Photos are by Wilmer Ross.

## Caption Transcribed by ChatGPT

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Photos are by Wilmer Ross.

THE FAIRBURY BLADE, THURSDAY, JULY 19, 1951

# More Water Damage

Photo by Wilmer Ross

Another scene of water damage. This picture was taken at the corner of Walnut and Clay streets, in the west part of town, and shows water above the basement windows of residence.

## Final Notes:

I transcribed this article so I can use the information about a new story I am writing about the two worst floods in Fairbury's history, the 1869 and 1951 floods.

I tried to be as accurate as possible in transcribing this article, but no transcription is perfect. I photographed the Blade photos using a digital camera from the paper Blade bound copies at the Fairbury Echoes Museum

Dale C. Maley

Fairbury, IL Historian

August 18, 2026